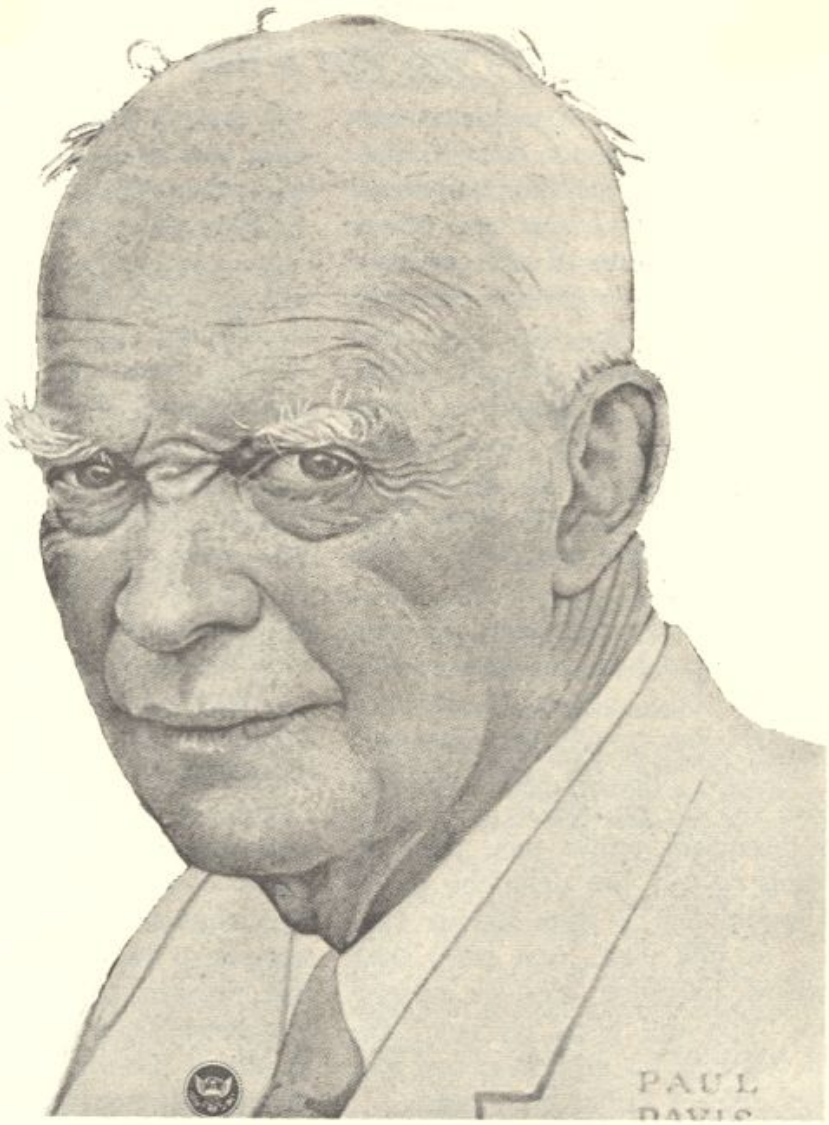
RESTORATION REVIEW



THE SPIRAL OF CHANGE

I know now that as a youngster I was concerned almost exclusively with the peaks and promontories of the historical terrain. Today I am interested too in what ordinary people, from age to age, moved by dissatisfaction with the inadequate, have done to accelerate the spiral of change.

DWIGHT EISENHOWER in *At Ease*

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JESUS WAS NOT A NICE MAN

Nice men do not get themselves crucified. They are not controversial. They are neither jailed nor run out of town. They do not elicit from others the extreme emotions of love and hate. They may not have friends that will sacrifice their lives for them, but neither do they have enemies. Their crowning virtue is prudence. Even though they may have some convictions, they manage to get by without making much sacrifice for them. They live rather safe and easy lives in this difficult world.

Jesus was not such a man. He was not nice nor did he call men to live nice lives. Nice people do not get themselves into trouble like Jesus and his disciples did. He called men to service and the mission he gave them was incendiary rather than tranquil. “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled,” he told them. And when they spoke of following him, he warned them, “You will drink my cup.” He even described his mission as one that brings division rather than peace.

“I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished.” (Lk. 12:50)

“They will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.” (Mt.24:9)

“Faxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Lk. 9:58)

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.” (Lk. 9:2324)

“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” (Lk. 12:51)

This is hardly the language of a man whose mission in life is to get along. Prudent men avoid such offensive expressions. Our Lord’s purpose was not to be nice, but to be redemptive. To save men one must sometime hurt them. To redeem one might have to offend. To make men whole often calls for the surgeon’s scalpel.

Everything today is to make folk nice. At Texas Woman's University we are expected to turn out "nice girls" with diplomas. We dare not produce even one Carrie Nation, the angry woman who took after saloons with a hatchet. They jailed her 30 times, but back again she would go to wreck another saloon. Actually she was a tender woman, but angered by what alcoholism did to her physician husband.

Oh, but for a few angry women! We have enough *nice* women. We need some trouble-makers who will help to set the world upright once more.

Even politicians these days are nice. Prudence seems to have the edge on principle. I may not vote for the ex-governor of Alabama, but there is something refreshing about him. He isn't a nice guy like everybody else. He hates in an honest kind of way, and he speaks his mind. Anger flashes from his dark eyes, and rage from his snarling lips. I watch with a measure of satisfaction that we still have some angry people. We have nice folk running out our ears. Give us fired up hearts! Surely there is a way to make all this Christian and to channel it as a blessing to man. To be sure, it has not been nice folk that have blazed the trails to a better world.

Nothing ails the church in our time more than its niceties. We have nice buildings, nice comfortable pews, nice preachers, nice people, and nice times. What congregation is in trouble due to its involvement in the urban crisis? Which one has bucked community tradition by building a truly integrated congregation? Other than an occasional Roman priest or Unitarian minister hardly any clergyman gets into trouble for the cause of social justice. We of the Churches of Christ are nice folk—urbane, middle-class, Caucasian, southern. We have a black church, but it goes its own way, with no encouragement from us to do otherwise. Jesus we know, and Paul we know, and Keeble we know, but who is the black church? We are content to remain strangers. In short, we are a nice, well-behaved denomination. We are not a redemptive society, for our mission is to survive as a people, not to change the world. Ours is a struggle to extend our own borders and strengthen our own institutions, not to alleviate human suffering. We have made peace with the world, not declared war against it.

We may sing about being Christian soldiers and pray about being like Jesus, but most of us would be frightened if such a life confronted us. Our pride makes us nice people when we ought to be reformers. Our wisdom makes us prudent when we ought to be fools for Christ's sake. Our strength makes us ambitious for the applause of the world when we should rejoice in the power of weakness.

We are reluctant to admit that the very ones among us that we resent and reject are the ones who are most like Jesus. Surely the fanatics and heretics will enter into the kingdom of God before us. We hold the coats of those who stone those preachers who are too outspoken to keep a job with a church. We call for prudence rather than honor; we prefer ambiguity to clarity. Sin no longer has its specifics, and few of us are sinners these days.

We concede to sin theoretically, but are hardly prepared to face up to the reality of it in our own hearts. And we have little interest in paying a man a handsome salary for telling us the ugly truth about ourselves.

He who warned us against a life that gains the plaudits of all has not called us to be nice folk, but to be like him. His was no easy conscience. He was a man of sorrows. He teaches us to lose that we might find, to die that we might live. He invites us to an incendiary fellowship and to a war against cosmic forces. It may be nice to be nice, but what does it mean to be like Jesus?

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UNITY MEET IN KENTUCKY

The Third Annual Unity Forum was conducted July 58 at Southeastern Christian College in Winchester, Ky. The first one, in 1966, was held at Bethany College as part of the celebration of the 100th year since Alexander Campbell's death. The second one was at Milligan College as part of its centennial celebration.

Kentucky is a suitable place for a gathering of disciples who represent the splintered remains of the Restoration Movement that began in that state. Not only was it in Kentucky that Barton Stone, J. T. Johnson, and Raccoon Smith were trailblazers for the cause we love, but it was there that the union occurred between the Stoneites ("Christians") and the Campbellites ("Disciples"), which made our pioneers one great Movement. This was, by the way, the first church union to take place in this country, making it an important chapter in the history of ecumenicity.

It thrilled my soul to see for the first time the place on West High Street in Lexington where this union was effected. The house is doomed to be razed by urban renewal projects in the near future unless concerned citizens, with a sense of history, can come up with some plan to make it an attractive historical shrine. The event dates back to the winter of 1831, the year that Kentucky sent Henry Clay to the U. S. Senate, who lived but a few blocks from where Raccoon Smith and Barton Stone united the Restoration Movement. In 1843 in the same city Senator Clay moderated the debate between N. L. Rice and Alexander Campbell, which lasted for sixteen days.

But the most important historical spot for our people in those parts is the Old Cane Ridge Meetinghouse, located about eight miles from Paris, Ky. Cane Ridge was one of several little churches pastored by Barton Stone as a Presbyterian minister. His ministry began in 1796, almost 15 years before the Campbells came to this country. When Stone left Cane Ridge in about 1810 he was no longer a Presbyterian. Neither were the churches

he had served. It is a thrilling story of a people's impassioned search for truth, and one feels close to it as he visits the old site.

Out of this history has come one of the most significant documents of our Movement, *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. This was part of the result of Stone's long search for freedom from ecclesiasticism. In it he called for a Bible-centered church government with the people themselves free to make their own decisions, apart from any separate councilor synod. He called for an end to party names and creeds and distinctive titles like *Reverend.* Most significant of all was the statement: "We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large."

Part of our Forum programs was held at Cane Ridge, with Prof. Richard Pope of Lexington Theological Seminary (Disciples of Christ) and I as the speakers. Some of the group sat up in the loft where the slaves of Stone's time sat, climbing up by a ladder from the outside. Dick and I sat on the elevated platform where Barton Stone, long before Alexander Campbell, first enunciated some of the great principles of Restoration. Dick spoke of how the spirit of Cane Ridge is the power of God that can make us one today. I spoke on Stone himself, showing how magnanimous he was in yielding the leadership of the Movement to Campbell, despite his own primacy.

We also recalled the great revivals held there, sometimes attracting upwards of 30,000 people. A modern Pentecost it must have been, with several preachers speaking at once and the Spirit manifesting himself in unusual ways. We observed that the Restoration Movement initially began in Holy Spirit revivals, and that it may take a return to Holy Spirit religion to make us a great force in the world. I pointed out that, if Stone's emphasis on the Spirit had prevailed instead of Campbell's stress on logic, we might have been a better balanced people. Head and heart had trouble getting together in those days.

The most popular part of the agenda at Winchester, however, was the sharing service on Lord's Day morning. This was the case at Bethany and Milligan. Something special happens when we all, with different backgrounds, gather around the Lord's table. It was a mutual ministry, with various ones saying what was in their hearts. In that moment we were brothers in the highest sense. This *was* unity. It taught us that it is indeed our mutual closeness to Christ that makes us one and makes "the fellowship of the saints" real.

This was followed by a most unusual celebration of the breaking of bread. Harry Bucalstein, who has come up through Independent Christian Church ranks, is a Jew by race. He conducted for us a Passover Seder just prior to the serving of the Supper. He went through all the ritual and drama of a Passover celebration in the orthodox Jewish home, which was of course the context in which Jesus broke bread with his disciples in that upper room. It reminded us of how Jewish the Christian beginnings were, and how Jewish Jesus was right up to the night of his betrayal.

I appreciated the contributions of our own Church of Christ men. Bill Waites of the Druid Hills congregation in Atlanta spoke on "Our Work in Inner City," and Ross Dye of the 16th and Decatur Streets church in Washington, D. C., addressed us on "Our Heritage." Both men showed a magnificent spirit, which cannot help but make things better in our divided ranks.

Of approximately 100 that attended the sessions the majority were premillennial brethren, who were our hosts. I rather think they got more out of it than any of the rest of us, one reason being their lack of such contacts through the years. Lavern Houtz, president of SCC, is to be commended for the fine program he put together and for the splendid way he executed it. We welcome him as a member of the committee that intends to carry on this good work from year to year until such time as our goal is at least partially realized.

It looks as if the fourth Forum in 1969 will be conducted in the Northeast, either in eastern Pennsylvania or New York, and will be sponsored by our own Church of Christ wing of the brotherhood of disciples. It is our time around since Disciples, Independents, and premills have all been hosts. We are hopeful that in 1970 the non-class brethren will sponsor it.

There is something delightful about one segment of our people inviting all the rest of us over to their house for supper and conversation. Somehow we learn to love each other in spite of ourselves. That reminds me of an amusing incident at one of these Forums. One brother from one of our very conservative wings explained that his elders were reluctant to encourage him to come. "If you are not careful," they warned him, "you'll get to where you like folks like that!"

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CHURCH OF CHRIST CHURCH

Back in January of 1966 I wrote an editorial in this journal with the above title, drawing my inspiration from a notice in the *Firm Foundation*, written by a woman who sought to correspond with a man "who must be a member of the Church of Christ Church." My comments were in the woman's defense, not only in terms of her social courage, but of the appropriateness of her terminology. There is indeed a Church of Christ Church, just as there is an Assembly of God Church, both of which are different from the Assembly of God and the Church of Christ of the scriptures. Just as "Church of God Church" would be more appropriate than "Church of God," as used by that denomination, so would "Church of Christ Church" be a proper description by those who exclusively employ "Church of Christ."

I was recently reminded of that editorial and of the good sister in the *Firm Foundation* (wondering too if she ever found a man!) when I was deluged by that admirable term "Church of Christ Church." Again it was a woman, but this time one who was a guest in our home and a lifetime member of the Church of Christ, whose father is an elder in the church and all of that. She was a *bona fide* cat, truly one of us, but she used "Church of Christ Church" all evening. It was refreshing to hear it. It was one more way that she was admitting that the church of her fathers was indeed another denomination, which within itself was nothing so terrible but only the result of the confused state of religion she had inherited. She had not left nor was she declaring war, but was simply facing facts as they are.

A few days later I was reading *Sentinel of Truth*, edited by that old war horse, Charles Holt, a delightful Christian and a Church of Christer from way back, and of the most conservative persuasion. He threw this at me in one of his editorials: "It is apparently becoming increasingly harder for the members of the Church of Christ Church to do this kind of studying." He went on to use the term again in the article. Church of Christ Church! And that coming from one of our editors who a few years ago would insist that we not only be addressed as Church of Christ, but church of Christ with the lower case *c*.

That lower case *c* business is still a shibboleth that is observed meticulously, and continues to be in my view the most asinine of all our asinine ways. A few editors outside the Church of Christ wing are trying their best, Out of deference to our wishes, to keep their *c's* straight. They'll write things like: "Representatives were there from the Baptist Church, Disciples of Christ, churches of Christ . . . " which leaves me cold in embarrassment. How ridiculous can we get! As I have observed in several editorials, Church of Christ is a fitting reference to the congregation of Christ, and has been so used by many writers, with or without the capital C.

Are we really trying to kid ourselves that all the others are denominations while we are something special? We outdo the Pharisees with this bit about the small *c*, and along with it we reveal an unnecessary ignorance. There is nothing improper about referring to the congregation that Christ built as the Church of Christ or the Church of God with the capital C. In previous editorials I have pointed out that the most august of religious writers, including the great historians, have employed the term Church of Christ in ways obviously unsectarian. We stiffen ourselves and use "church of Christ" in a sectarian fashion (by applying it to only one part of God's people), while they relax themselves and use "Church of Christ" in an unsectarian way (by applying it to all God's people).

While perhaps unintended, the most orthodox among us use terminology that is equal to "Church of Christ Church." A recent full-page ad in the Denton paper read "The congregations of the Church of Christ welcome you." This is the same as saying "The Church of Christ Churches welcome you." Does not *church* mean *congregation?*

But the point of these remarks is to say that I am gratified and encouraged by this frank and honest admission, on the part of some at least, that we too have our sectarian ways. The first step toward reform is an admission that we are in need of it.

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SOME THINGS WORTHY OF PRAISE

My students at the university where I teach are always impressed with the moral dictum laid down by Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher, to the effect that our conduct should be guided by the desire to do that which is worthy of praise, whether it in fact is praised or not. *Is it praiseworthy?* is the question we should ask, Kant tells us, and not *Will it be praised?*

At this point many of us have our values confused. We desire the applause of the crowd. We want to be praised and honored. We sometimes do things if we can believe it will in some way bring us honor. And yet much of what we do is not really worthy of praise to begin with. Surely many things that are done for the sake of praise and not praiseworthy, while the things that are really praiseworthy are seldom praised. It is a fact of life. Jesus spoke to this when he said: “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (Lk. 16:15)

Some of the testimonial dinners I read about may illustrate the point. They can hardly be proper for the Christian, for if one is really worthy of praise, the lavish outpouring of it would be distasteful to him. And there is the risk that his life has not really been worthy of praise, but of blame, and thus it would be a farce. One old brother was recently honored by a gathering of the Establishment to a testimonial dinner, where they competed with one another in squandering praise upon a man who has done more to carnalize the Churches of Christ with hate and strife than most anyone of our time. It was his reward for being a good party man. Leading ministers mouthed epithets that they could not have possibly believed, for it had been only a short time before when the object of their praise was the object of their scorn, when the side he was going to take was still uncertain. It was the most disgusting manifestation of rank sectarianism I had seen in many a day. It would have been as shocking as Belshazzar’s handwriting on the wall if some angelic voice had spoken judgment on the man’s real character, his rudeness, his carnage, his egoism.

This is why it is just as well that we not indulge in this kind of thing, for if one is worthy of praise, let God reward him in his own magnificent way. If he is not worthy, it is an insipid experience for all concerned.

I do not mean, of course, that there is never a time for praise, for after all the Bible tells us to "Pay honor to whom honor is due." My readers sometime complain that my editorials are too critical. "Why don't you ever *praise* the Church of Christ?" I am asked. The question is a fair one, and I accept the criticism as valid. There is, however, more positive notes in my writings than my critics realize. Yet my writings have hardly been full of praise.

I have, therefore, been in search of those things worthy of praise among us, and I have come up with several that I want to pass along to you for the sake of encouragement. These do not take the form of growing budgets, real estate holdings, or even for being "the fastest growing church in the United States" (which I doubt). In fact, the praiseworthy things that I see are not receiving much, if any, praise from others. It confirms what I have already said: the praiseworthy things usually go without praise, and they are often criticized and opposed.

Here is my list, which I number for convenience, though not necessarily in their order of importance.

1. *Moving Nearer to the Christian World.*

I trust the term "Christian World" will not prove offensive, for I am implying that what we call the Church of Christ is but a part of the world of Christians. Even more serious is the tragic fact that we have long been a separated part, with almost no contact with the rest of Christendom. We have read its commentaries, sung its songs, patterned our buildings and institutions after it, but have otherwise ignored the Christian world, except to attempt to evangelize it as if it were completely alien to the gospel. Indeed "the outsider" has meant in our glossary of terms a devout Baptist and pious Presbyterian as well as a rank sinner of the world.

I happily praise the overtures being made to correct this narrow and erroneous attitude. A few examples will serve to encourage you as I have been encouraged.

Last month in Uppsala, Sweden, there was a great gathering of Christians from all over the world, representing most denominations. It was another convocation of the World Council of Churches of Christ. This has of course been going on for a long time, but insofar as our people have been concerned it might never have happened at all, for we ignored it as if it did not exist, despite all the important things that happen through the organization. Well, at Uppsala it was different. For the first time there was some effort to provide Church of Christ representation. Quite appropriate, I would say, for a World Council of Churches of Christ! A sound (or *rather* sound), loyal, *bona fide* minister among us was on hand, and he reported his impressions in one of our publications, and it was all well done, positive and helpful in its approach. At last we were there in history and making history. This is good. While no one can *officially* represent us, I suppose, this brother was

sent by numerous brethren over the country raising the money for his trip. Its purpose was to put one of our men in Uppsala as an observer. And we did!

Part of the Christian world we have ignored is other wings of our own Restoration Movement. Many of us are still unaware that there is an Independent Christian Church, which is separate from the more liberal Disciples of Christ, and which is strikingly similar to our own Churches of Christ in attitude and practice, except that they use the piano. I regret to add that the similarities are in respect to our weaknesses as well as our strengths. Anyway, we have had almost nothing to do with each other, despite our brotherhood. Last month the North American Christian Convention, representing these conservative churches, invited a prominent Texas minister of the Church of Christ to take an honored place on its program. That he did a bang-up good job surprised nobody, and that it was reported to be the most esteemed of all the presentations is secondary. What is important is that they invited him and that he accepted! It has been only a short time back when the same minister was invited to take a similar part on a Baptist program, but backed out of it when pressure was applied by the keepers of orthodoxy. Things are changing.

When the editor of the *Firm Foundation* goes up East on his own volition and enters a meeting with "representatives of the leading denominations of the land," and then comes back home and tells it on himself in his own paper, we do indeed have reason to be encouraged. When Rome started changing I found it delightfully incredible. Now that Austin is changing I find it almost too good to be true. I am well aware that the editor, when writing of such events, shows that same old attitude that they are the sectarians, and they are hindered by "a power structure" from denying their denominationalism, while we are free of such restraints. Still I praise the editor for venturing into a den of Daniels, and I thank God for this new insight into what might be.

A few months later the same editor wrote of his unusual experiences in Chicago where he did such wild things as to have dialogue with students and faculty of a Roman Catholic college (of all places!). He mixed this with sessions with Negro brethren, Christian Church leaders, and non-cooperatives of the Church of Christ. These were not debates, or one man haranguing the others, but armchair discussions with an honest effort to understand each other. He came back to Austin and wrote this concerning his contact with Negroes: "There is no respecter of persons with God; all look alike to him. And they must to us. For one child of God to refuse another fellowship on the basis of race or any other prejudicial matter is intolerable to God and must be to us. Negro brethren are caught in a cruel predicament." This is eminently Christian and we commend the editor for such noble sentiments. That this comes from the heart of a Christian editor is important, and that it comes from the heart of Texas is encouraging.

2. *Efforts to Communicate with Church of Christ Negroes.*

We have virtually ignored the black Church of Christ, with its separate leadership, lectureship (which is attended by thousands) , publications, schools, and theology. As with American culture in general, there are two distinct Churches of Christ, one white and one black.

Apart from what might be called “the Marshall Keeble syndrome,” the white church has had almost no contact at all with the black, and it most certainly has made no effort to make of the white and the black “one New Man.” Through the years the white leadership coddled brother Keeble, bestowing upon him unnecessary honor and attention, thus proving to itself that it was not prejudice. “After all, look at the way we treat Marshall Keeble!” seemed to have made invulnerable a practice that was nothing more than warmed over Jim Crowism. It is an ugly fact that the white, southern Church of Christ has been, and still is for the most part, racist.

Unfortunately Marshall Keeble did not have the convictions, or perhaps the courage, of a Christian Church black minister that I heard recently. He minced no words in telling the white people how unchristian they have been in the way they have treated the blacks. “We meet only a few blocks from you, but you act as if we did not exist. It is obvious that you do not accept us as equals,” he told them.

But brother Keeble enjoyed his haven among the whites. He royally entertained them with his unique style of preaching, and in some cases the entertainment may have been similar to the way Paul Robeson entertained with his fancy tap dancing. The whites who crowded to hear brother Keeble would not have been entertained by the kind of talk they would have heard from this Christian Church brother, who spoke to the whites about their sins against the black man. Instead brother Keeble preached baptism, giving illustrations that kept his white brothers in stitches.

Along with the glory, which I readily admit, there is the tragedy in Marshall Keeble’s life. He lived to see his school stolen by the very whites who presumed to honor him. He lived to see his own white brethren, who had allowed him to sit at their right hand in high places, fail to make any contribution at all to the civil rights movement. For years he allowed himself to be “the pet nigger” in the Church of Christ without ever raising his voice against the white church’s most cruel sin. He was an Uncle Tom who allowed racists to ease their consciences by accepting him when he knew they would never accept his black brothers. The same Church of Christ colleges that featured him on their lectureships would not even allow a Negro to enroll as a student! What a shame and a disgrace! Marshall Keeble was surely a good and noble man, but he was not a prophet. Before a white audience he was insensitive to the sins that matter most. Had he been sensitive, he would not have enjoyed a half-century reign as our pet nigger.

It is therefore particularly encouraging that *out* of the south and *in* the south there should emerge a sincere effort to communicate with the black church. Back in the summer some fifty brethren assembled in Atlanta to discuss ways to improve race relations in the Churches of Christ. Both blacks and whites prayed together, talked together, and concluded by drafting proposals for better race relations. They called on the colleges to enroll more Negroes, and suggested that congregations integrate. They proposed that all our institutions be fully integrated, homes for aged, Bible chairs, camps, schools, workshops—everything. They asked the colleges to hire Negro teachers, and proposed that publications include articles by and news of the black church.

Their attitude seemed to be that there should be no white or black church, but simply the church, with all. God's people one indeed.

The white minister who told a black brother that he was quite willing for his daughter to marry his son may have been overenthusiastic. That is about like one venturing to ride a bucking bronc who has never yet been on a horse.

But we are encouraged, and we praise this noble effort. It was eminently Christian, and I am pleased for us to be really like Christ for a change. The conference has not received wide acclaim; but even if it be not praised, it is praiseworthy. Such as this will make us a great people.

3. *Serious Effort to Face Up to the Issues of the Times*

Here I have in mind many individuals among us who have awakened to the need of living in the twentieth century. I see it in the mail that comes to my desk. It is evident in the ministry of preachers who are trying to relate their messages to the times. Thousands are tiring of the old cliches, of answering questions that no one is asking, and of ignoring the world aflame. They are moving out onto the frontiers. They want their lives and preaching to make a difference in the world tomorrow.

Our people are becoming more conscious of problems related to social justice, of the starving millions, and of half a world that can neither read nor write. They have grown weary of sermons that denounce "the social gospel" and confine the church to centuries past. We have tasted the thrill of growth. We have a passion for maturity. The obscurantists among us had better get out of the way or they'll be run down by those in search for relevance.

4. *Missionary Zeal*

I have criticized our missionary endeavors as too often efforts to build up our own party, and I still believe this a valid criticism. Yet there is much to praise. I am especially impressed with the many young missionaries that desire to bring Christ to the people, and not simply a Church of Christ version of Christianity. As I have already suggested in this journal, there is reason to believe that these men may in turn "convert" the church back home as to the real import of the gospel.

5. *A Better Grasp of the Concept of Gospel*

It sounds reckless to say that our people do not know what the gospel is, but the criticism might well hold up if one takes the trouble to hear and read what we have been saying. In a moment of candor one of our leading ministers said at a unity meeting: "Our preachers have a better concept of the gospel than their preaching would indicate." The preaching does generally reveal little understanding of the grace of God. We dwell too little on the great themes of redemption and forgiveness.

But there are signs that this is improving. The influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of so many of our people is working this change. We are speaking more of God's grace. We are praising God more. Many of our people are becoming sweeter, more loving people. They pray more, study more, associate with others more, and enjoy life more. God has come alive to them. Christ is real in their lives. This is the gospel.

6. *Lively Publications*

For years our leading journals have been dead, if ever they were alive at all. It has been unkind to allow them to go unburied. I have long been convinced that they are little read, even by those who habitually subscribe, except perhaps to page through them or to scan news items. Nor have they deserved to be read. They are *dead*—irrelevant, superficial, obscurant, sectarian, snobbish, and anti-intellectual. Sunday School literature is little better.

But there are important signs that we are coming alive in respect to what we write. One vital area is church bulletins. Here the writer seems to be freer. It is almost as if he were selecting a group of friends to whom he was writing a personal letter from the bottom of his heart and from the best of his mind. I have been collecting some of these bulletins from everywhere, with their daring editorials and their lively ideas, thinking that I might someday devote an article to what they are saying. You would be encouraged.

Out of the mission field is coming a few journals that give evidence that the church of tomorrow is going to have a different literature. From South America, especially, we have evidence of men thinking new thoughts and entertaining new ideas. They seem to believe that we are morally obligated to be intelligent, and to speak and write like intelligent people.

Especially encouraging are the noble efforts of a rapidly growing Church of Christ publishing house in Austin, which is, on nearly all fronts, endeavoring to issue respectable reading material. Its news weekly is aware of our larger brotherhood of Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ, and its news items are reflections of maturity rather than cheap sectarianism. It has ventured to publish books that really speak to our time, and even to issue a multi-volumed commentary that comes to grips with the real problems of biblical studies. Its Sunday School literature has a new look, which seeks to be honest with the

problems raised by science and technology and to deal with the social problems of our time.

That the publisher is on a perilous mission is evident enough. There are a few signs that sectarian pressures may be causing him to have second thoughts, but we hope he remains steadfast. The contribution he is making is incalculable. Our historians of tomorrow will recognize what he is doing now. It is indeed praiseworthy even if it goes unpraised.

As for his going unpraised, I might illustrate from an Oklahoma church newspaper that has come my way since beginning this article. The editor is alarmed over some of the Sunday School material published by the Austin firm, especially because of some remarks made about evolution. The material does not, of course, advocate evolution, but it simply makes no big deal of it as obscurant writers among us usually do. In short, the Oklahoma editor wants "the *new* Austin" to be as superficial and anti-intellectual as "the *old* Austin." He thinks it a huge error for the *new* Austin to say: "Evolutionists are concerned with the 'how'. Genesis tells about the 'who'. The Bible does not tell *how* God created the world."

For these terrible sins coming out of Austin, defiling the whole state of Oklahoma, the editor announces that he will henceforth accept no more advertisements from the Austin publisher, nor will he purchase any of the firm's publications. Moreover he calls for a boycott. He calls on all his readers, congregations and bookstores included, to henceforth do no business at all with them. And he assures them that this would be *courageous* on their part. The truth is that the editor is himself a coward. He is afraid to think, afraid of exposure, and afraid of questions that he might not be able to answer with the same old shallow replies.

All this gives support to what Prof. Reagan dares to tell us elsewhere in this issue. It shows what we are up against. But as for ultimate victory I have no doubt. The signs that are beginning to appear are sure.

And so it is in my heart to praise the praiseworthy.—*the Editor*

He drew a circle that shut me out —
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in.

—*Edwin Markham*

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ARE WE ANTI-INTELLECTUAL?

By David Reagan

As a college professor, I am deeply committed to the search for truth. It is this search which motivates and inspires all my intellectual endeavors.

As a Christian, I am deeply committed to the Truth, Jesus Christ the Son of God. It is this commitment, this faith, which sustains my life and gives it meaning and beauty.

I see no conflict between these two commitments.

I believe that God endowed me with an intellect and that He intended for me to use it. And in the use of it, I do not believe that he intended any questions to be off-limits—even the question of His own existence.

For God does not desire the worship and service of robots. If He did, He could have created at the beginning of time a million legions of angels and commanded them to worship him throughout all the endless ages of eternity. Instead, He created Man, "in the image of God created He him," giving unto Man an eternal spirit *and* an intellect, a free will mind, with which man could choose to honor or rebuke his Creator.

And Man has been using his mind ever since, too often arrogantly to the wrath of God, occasionally humbly to the joy of God. But God expects Man to use his mind, for the faith can never be the product of ignorant dogma, superstition, or fear. It can only emanate from intellectual conclusion.

As long as I believed in the Lord Jesus because my Mother wanted me to believe, or my Father encouraged me to believe, or my friends pressured me to believe, or my minister scared me to believe—my faith was anxious and my life failed to reflect the love of Jesus. I attended the services of the church regularly, but I did so because it was expected of me and because I thought this was the premium that had to be paid for the Christian eternal life insurance policy. Like so many others around me, I was a weekend Christian, and my week day life continued to be engulfed in selfishness.

It was only when I began to question, when I began to think, that Christianity began to have any real meaning. I questioned everything. Does God exist? Was Jesus a hoax? Is life a joke? I questioned and questioned and questioned, and out of this I developed a faith in the Lord that transcended any belief which I had ever held before.

My life was transformed, for Christianity became a way of life rather than a weekend worship service or a dogmatic creed. Anxiety was replaced with joy as I began to break out of my shell and reach out to love and serve my fellow man.

My questioning continues. My faith grows. My intellect serves as a tool of my faith.

My experience reminds me of the interlocking theory of knowledge developed by the theologian, Thomas Aquinas. Living in a dark age when faith and reason were considered incompatible, Aquinas braved the censure of the Church to argue that faith and knowledge could never be in real conflict since they were both of divine origin. Empirical inquiry could only serve therefore to buttress man's faith in God. It might undermine and even destroy false doctrines of the Church, but it could never challenge the citadels of truth contained in God's revelation to man. It was this central idea which ultimately led to the liberation of the mind that in turn produced the Renaissance and the Reformation.

In like manner, another great intellectual, a secular one, John Stuart Mill, writing in the 1850's in his remarkable essay *On Liberty,* argued powerfully that intellectual truth-seeking is essential not only to the maintenance of freedom (his major thesis) but is also crucial to the vitality of religious faith. Cautioning against the naive acceptance of the sacredness of orthodox religious doctrines, Mill asserted that even the strongest held religious opinions need to be "fully, frequently, and fearlessly" discussed if they are to be prevented from degenerating into dead dogma. "There is a class of people," he observed, "who think it enough if a person assents undoubtingly to what they think is true, though he has no knowledge whatever of the grounds of the opinion, and could not make a tenable defense of it against the most superficial objections. Such persons, if they can once get their creed taught from authority, naturally think that no good, and some harm, comes of its being allowed to be questioned . . . This is not knowing the truth. Truth, thus held, is but one superstition . . ."

The mutual compatibility of faith and reason thus emerges as a lesson of personal experience, history, and logic.

Nonetheless, our Restoration Brotherhood has long been characterized by its hostility toward the questioning mind, and as a result we have developed a reputation for a sort of fundamentalist anti-intellectualism. This is a cruel paradox, for the Restoration Movement was born in a surge of intellectual ferment in which brilliant minds revolted against established religion and questioned many of its most sacred assumptions.

But somewhere along the line the momentum of the Restoration Movement was lost. The momentum was exchanged for a monument which we built to ourselves. The Restoration Movement became an end rather than a means.

Smugness and complacency crept in, and combined with the inevitable arrogance and pride, the quest for truth was strangled. Faith in Him became secondary to faith in Us. We were the one and only true church. We had the infallible interpretation of the scriptures. And, of course, we had the secret to salvation.

We began to play God. And when men play God, they become intolerant. And intolerance leads to division. And so, we began to splinter into two dozen or more little groups, each one intent upon proving its own credentials as the one and only true representative of the New Testament church.

Sectarianism became our life blood. We devoted our energies to vicious invective aimed at those whom we had formerly considered brethren in the Lord, but who were now labeled as "Heretics," or "Liberals," or "Antis," or "Regressives." We even raided their congregations to save their converts. And let us not forget that from behind the walls which we had built around ourselves, we pompously condemned the Protestant world for its division while all the time piously claiming that we were "nondenominational." (May the Lord forgive us of our childish blindness!)

It was only natural, of course, that within such a fractured and bleeding atmosphere of acute legalism and sectarianism the emphasis should come to be placed upon blind creedal conformity as the fundamental test of faith. Needless to say, such a perverted concept of Christian faith depended upon a spirit of anti-intellectualism for its very existence. Thus, we created an intellectual straitjacket for our members. Faith became dogma, and faith withered to a pitiful sore of hopeful anxiety.

Thanks be to the Lord for opening our eyes! Thanks be to Him for the new breath of life that is stirring within the Restoration brotherhood today. The sectarian heritage is being renounced. We are returning to the ideals of those who founded the Movement, and in doing so, we are breaking the shackles of legalism and anti-intellectualism.

But it is not easy. Like prisoners liberated from a dungeon, the process of adjusting to the light is painful. The new freedom is even frightening, and so some, the security of the dungeon is preferable. But for most, the taste of freedom will be irreversible.

Yes, we are headed in the right direction, and we are making great strides, but we need to be constantly reminded that we have not yet broken all the chains of our former bondage. Many of the old habits and attitudes are tugging at us to return to the false security which exists behind the sectarian walls. And certainly one of these is the spirit of anti-intellectualism.

There can be no doubt that the anti-intellectualism which characterized the church of my youth has definitely waned in its fanatical intensity. Among our brethren today, higher education—even in the Bible—has become respectable. Harvard is seldom ever condemned anymore as the citadel of religious subversion, and our young people who are graduates of the northeastern schools are no longer automatically dismissed as "educated fools." Non-inspired literature is accepted for study in Bible classes. Every man who can lead in prayer is no longer handed a New Testament and urged immediately to become a full time minister. Yet, I would contend that only the intensity of the feeling has

diminished, for I am convinced that the Restoration Brotherhood still remains in the grips of anti-intellectualism.

The evidence of this fact is abundant. Take for example the problem of preacher training. We have at least come to the realization that some degree of academic preparation for prospective ministers is desirable, if not essential, in a society (and a brotherhood) with a rapidly increasing educational level; but our response to this realization has been incredible. We have rushed to establish "Schools of Preaching" in which individuals are crammed with creedal points supplemented with appropriate memory verses. Modern theology is ignored as "modernism," and little, if any, exposure is given to psychology and philosophy, despite the fact that both of these subjects are indispensable tools for a 20th Century minister attempting to be relevant and useful in an urban society. The unfortunate result is that graduation day too often gives birth to a polished sectarian who is ready to do battle in defense of his particular group's infallibility, but who is woefully prepared to minister to the real needs of any urban congregation.

Our Christian Colleges are hardly better. They do attempt to provide their students with a broader education, but the result is anything but liberating to the mind. The approach is more akin to a process of propaganda in which the student is indoctrinated with the orthodox opinions on matters political, economic, social, and religious. Controversy is avoided like the plague. In fact, there is often a conscious effort to protect "the Faith" of the student body by attempting to isolate it from the mainstream of intellectual upheaval. Accordingly, "non Christian" speakers are taboo at chapel services, and this intellectual ban even extends to those persons who represent divergent viewpoints within the Restoration Brotherhood.

The yearly lectureships sponsored by the colleges thus stack up as nothing more than elaborately staged indoctrination festivals where the hierarchy's viewpoint on each issue is propounded by carefully selected brotherhood spokesmen. Opposing viewpoints may be mentioned and will certainly be refuted with "airtight" logic, but the advocates of the opposing view will remain mute from the lack of an invitation to engage in dialogue.

This technique of thought control reminds me again of Mills' essay *On Liberty.* Mill warned that the prevailing opinion on any matter, particularly religious matters, would inevitably deteriorate into dogma, prejudice, and empty mechanistic formula unless it is exposed regularly to the challenge of free discussion:

> He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion . . . Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as

> refutations. That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them.

It should be noted in passing that the blame for this tragically stifling intellectual environment of our Christian Colleges cannot be placed entirely upon the shoulders of the administrators. To a great extent, they are simply catering to the wishes of their clientele. They are well aware that the parents of their students want their young people to be protected from the "liberal theories" which predominate at the state universities. They know too that the parents expect the colleges to serve as "defenders-of-the-faith."

Evidence of this constituency awareness is to be found in the massive public relations campaign which one of our leading Christian Colleges felt obliged to finance recently before the establishment of its new graduate divinity school. The campaign had a dual purpose. It was designed first of all to convince the brotherhood of the need for such a program. But it was also aimed at allaying fears that the program would liberalize the faith by concentrating more on theology than Bible "fundamentals." The implementation of the program was such a delicate undertaking that it was considered prudent to discard the traditional name for the degree—Bachelor of Divinity—since it was feared that the very title would conjure up visions of "modernism."

Inevitably, the sermons delivered by the average products of our Preaching Schools and Christian Colleges are steeped in anti-intellectualism. In fact, many of our pulpits tend to be intellectual wastelands. Sunday after Sunday our congregations are still bombarded with worm worn cliches from orthodox sermon outline books. Either the "plan of salvation" is rattled off with machine gun precision in phrases that could be chanted in unison or else a creedal point is hammered home with legalistic gymnastics befitting a latter day Clarence Darrow. Thought provoking lessons of substance are rarely heard. Hardly anyone takes the time to prepare a mature discussion of the nature of Jesus, the operation of the Holy Spirit, the concept of redemption, or the essence of Christian love.

Nor does anyone seem to really care about grappling with the vital and complex problems of living in a world of social revolution and rapidly changing values. Let's face it, we are irrelevant. "We are majoring in minors and minoring in majors." We have a fixation about preaching the "plan of salvation" over and over again to audiences in which 90% of the people have already responded to the plan—and the remaining 10% are children who are too young to do so.

We are caught up in a breakdown of law and order, a moral nosedive, and the greatest social revolution that the modern world has ever experienced, yet our ministers drone on and on about … well, about what? Is it any wonder that our young people are dropping out and that our faithful regulars seem bored stiff?

Our people are hungering and thirsting for relevance. They are seeking meaning within a society that appears to be falling apart at the seams. Yet, we avoid social topics, political issues, and ethical questions, for these are controversial, and furthermore, they smack of the intellectualism of the social gospel advocates. In our fear of becoming so identified with the world that we cannot speak to it, we have become so utterly remote that we are equally incapable of speaking.

Another place where our anti-intellectualism shows is in our Bible school publications which we have the audacity to call "educational materials." Most of the adult quarterlies which are currently being utilized by our congregations are nothing more than propaganda pamphlets geared to a junior high school mentality.

Our "study" of the Bible is wholly uncritical. We search the scriptures diligently not for the purpose of finding the truth, but for proving the truth that we think we have already found. Thus we focus endlessly on superficial proof texts rather than probing the scriptures in depth for their spiritual meat.

Equally distressing is the pathetic way we tend to worship the King James version of the Bible. Despite the voluminous errors of this translation and despite significant advances in Greek scholarship and textural criticism in recent years, we continue to cling nostalgically to this "inspired" version whose cryptic and mysterious English serves as the fundamental legal basis for many of our equally cryptic doctrines.

We denounced the Revised Standard Version as "Communist inspired" and even joined in efforts to slander the reputations of many of its scholarly translators. But the recent flood of new translations has overwhelmed us, and so we have begun to retreat somewhat from our dogmatic defense of the King's English of 1611. Some of the more enlightened of our brethren have sought refuge in the American Standard translation, although its literalness often results in grammatical monstrosities that make the King James version appear rather modern. We can't quite seem to grasp the idea that the art of translation involves far more than a simple word for word interchange of Greek and English equivalents.

This attitude toward the Bible contributes to the intensity of the strongest continuing manifestation of our anti-intellectualism, which includes the attitude of our leaders toward science. We have declared war on science, and we have demanded nothing less than unconditional surrender. An example of this is the attack upon the theory of evolution. It seems to me that the exact age of the earth and the date of man's origin are irrelevant, for the purpose of Genesis is not to tell the *how* and the *when*, but to show that God was the Creator. Nothing in the record requires us to argue that the earth is but 6,000 years old, and has not science proved that the earth is much older?

All this creates a credibility gap for our young people, which causes them to doubt other of our interpretations.

What are we going to do if the theory of evolution is proved? Even more traumatic, what will be our response to the synthesis of life? Will we withdraw from reality completely and paranoically deny such scientific accomplishments, as the Christian Scientists have done with respect to the germ theory of disease? We must realize that we have nothing to fear from science, and that the advances of science have a salutary effect upon religion.

There is no way around the conclusion that in an age of higher education and space exploration, a religious faith clinging desperately and pathetically to intellectual indoctrination and the principles of pre-Newtonian science is bound to appear irrelevant and futile.

We have simply got to come to the realization that no one has a monopoly on the truth. That there is ultimate truth there can be no doubt. But man is fallible, and his fallibility produces error. Many of the "truths" which we hold so dear today will no doubt be laughed at tomorrow as nothing more than old wives tales and childish superstitions. The most that we can do is devote ourselves to the search for truth, and that search requires a never-ending process of critical self-evaluation.

This is not a plea for a transformation of the church into an egghead's philosophical society. It is only a plea for openness. If we are so confident that we have arrived at the truth, why should we be so fearful of subjecting that truth to the test of reasoned inquiry?

Let us, therefore, throw dogma to the wind and cease our stifling of discussion and our creedalizing of thought. Let us welcome the liberating effect of education, and let us repent for those whom we have banished for daring to think. Let us revitalize our religion by replacing our dead faith in a sectarian creed with a vibrant faith in a living Savior who loved the truth and died that it might triumph.—*Austin College, Sherman, Texas*

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OUR READERS SPEAK

Your editorial is always good, especially the one about Jesus helping us to quit smoking. Indeed He does!

When the children were small I began smoking and my system craved something, and I enjoyed them. As I grew as a Christian and knowing we should present our selves to Christ as a living sacrifice, smoking worried me very much.

So with Christ's help I quit, six years ago or so. It wasn't easy. I'll the evening instead of sitting and watching TV I would read the Bible. During the morning hours I would keep the radio tuned in to some inspiring messages of some Baptist ministers. And I prayed.

With Christ it was possible. I still crave the cigarette, and sometimes I dream of them. But by the grace of God I will never take another—a sister in Illinois

I was reared in the non-class segment of our brotherhood. But I am losing all interest in trying to promote any particular brand of church-ism. I do want very much to preach Christ and to stress the importance of our oneness in Him.—*Mississippi*

I have been reading *Restoration Review* for almost a year and I feel a little guilty that I enjoy it so much, so you know which party of the church I grew up in. I do thank you, as well as some others, whose writings have, I pray, opened my narrow mind till I' can 'See Christ a little clearer.—*California*

Many thanks for *Restoration Review.* Perhaps I can say more sometime when there is a little more freedom. I am still dependent on the above letterhead for a living and in such cases one has to be careful.—*Georgia*

Keep encouraging us to be like—Jesus.—*New York*

I am seriously thinking of separating myself from the Restoration Movement rather than be a stumbling block to those who are convinced that the Holy Spirit has been captured between the pages of a black-bound book and has no power to work today. Thank you for being someone who is not afraid to recognize an "unorthodox" brother.—*Kentucky*

I have read your *Review* for years but always read the much fingered copy in the library at Abilene Christian College, but now that I am no longer a member among the *elect* and *select* I have been missing your provocative issues.

Let me commend you in your attempts to continue a genuine interest in the Restoration principle. I hope that from the breach that is no doubt in the offing something of lasting good will come for some of us who can hardly throw off some of the teachings which still have validity for us.—*Texas*

I am thankful that you and brother Ketcherside finally met Christ on a "Damascus road" and were converted to Him. I am thankful that both of you have elected to remain in the Church of Christ rather than defect. As free men in the universal body of Christ you are rendering Him and His followers a service long overdue.—*Indiana*

We are old time members of the church, but have been looking over the wall at some amazing things of the Lord. We read, as you and that precious Ouida seem to be doing, and have come to know so much that had been unknown for too long.—*California*

This journal circulates only by virtue of its freedom to say what it believes needs to be said, not by loyalty to any faction. If you believe in this, why not help us reach more people?

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